



Bosses stick the BOOT into Fair Work chief

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Employers have hit back at Fair Work Commission president Ian Ross after he challenged their bid to change workplace laws, accusing him of “artfully deflecting” from problems facing the tribunal.

Australian Mines and Metals Association chief executive Steve Knott said the FWC’s bureaucratic approach to approving enterprise agreements “would make Sir Humphrey Appleby blush”.

On Thursday, Justice Ross challenged the Business Council of Australia over its proposed changes to workplace laws, saying they could increase profits and reduce wages but may not lift productivity.

He also questioned the claim by BCA chief executive Jennifer Westacott that the Fair Work Act’s better off overall test was a “productivity killer”.

He rejected recent criticism by Mr Knott that the rapid decline in

enterprise agreements was because of the complexity of the bargaining laws and the FWC’s “overtly technical and highly inefficient” approach.

Mr Knott said yesterday significant improvement and greater consistency were required by the commission to restore employer confidence in the system.

“We’d like the president to be doing what he’s paid to do, and address these fundamental issues, rather than engaging in political commentary or providing gratuitous advice to employer groups and unions on how to advance their members’ interests,” he said. “The president was last year given significant new resources — six new tribunal members, despite publicly stating he only needed one. Our advice to the president is to stop artfully deflecting.”

The BCA refused to comment directly but released a “fact sheet” reiterating the case for changing the BOOT.